Suicide Bombings in Operation Iraqi Freedom

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SUICIDE BOMBING is the act of blowing oneself up while trying to kill (destroy) or injure (damage) a target. The target might be military or civilian or both. Typically, the killing or physical destruction of the target is less important than the terror generated by the act. Suicide bombing is a disruptive firepower capability (based on bond-relationship targeting) used by opposing forces (OPFORs) that lack traditional destructive firepower.[1]

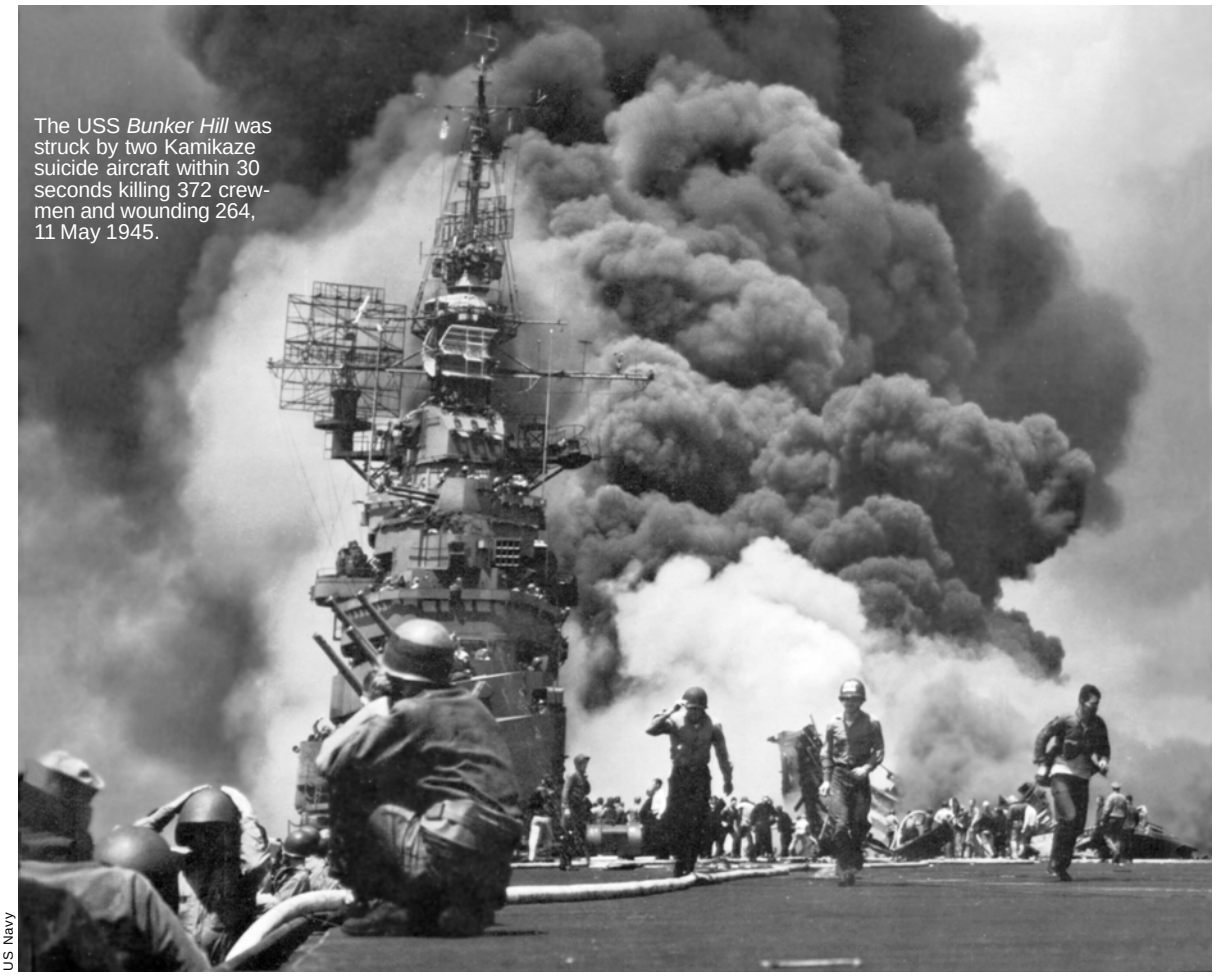
Suicide bombing is a criminal warfighting technique because it almost always falls within the not crime/not war overlap of nonstate OPFOR operations. When state forces, such as the Iraqi military, use the technique, they violate the rules of war by taking off their uniforms to appear as noncombatants (thus mimicking nonstate OPFORs) for stealth-masking purposes. The Japanese use of Kamikaze aircraft during World War II is considered a legitimate use of military force against military force, but that early prototype form of suicide bombing has not been used for almost 60 years.

Persistent suicide bombings during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) (in pre-, trans-, and postmajor combat operations) suggest this "criminal-warfighting" technique will be used with increasing frequency against U.S. Army and allied forces deployed for combat and humanitarian missions in and around Islamic lands.[2] Therefore, U.S. Army, Marine, and constabulary personnel must develop appropriate intelligence, countermeasure, and force-protection capabilities to interdict, mitigate, and respond to what has become a threat against U.S. forces in the global war against radical Islamic terrorism and insurgency.

Suicide Operations and Military Traditions

Suicide operations (bombings and attacks) fall within three dominant philosophical military traditions: Western, Oriental, and Islamic, each of which holds varying views on this offensive technique at individual and unit levels of doctrinal employment.

Western tradition. At the individual level, the Western tradition does not advocate suicide operations. Soldiers or pilots might, on their own initiative and typically when mortally wounded, take as many opposing soldiers with them as possible. In this instance, the combatant has nothing to lose, as in the case of a dying U.S. torpedo-bomber pilot ramming his aircraft into a Japanese warship during World



The USS *Bunker Hill* was struck by two Kamikaze suicide aircraft within 30 seconds killing 372 crewmen and wounding 264, 11 May 1945.

US Navy

War II. In rare instances, uninjured individuals heroically sacrifice their lives against hopeless odds in defense of their comrades, as did two Delta snipers in Mogadishu, Somalia, in 1993, who chose to help a downed Black Hawk crew.[3]

At the unit level, desperation in war can result in suicidal or near-suicidal operations. The holding action of King Leonidas and his Spartan bodyguards at the Battle of Thermopylae in 480 B.C. forms the basis of what might be considered a "heroic" activity. More than a millennium and a half later, the battles of Verdun and The Somme during World War I were clearly suicidal operations as opposing forces repeatedly attempted to break the trench stalemate with massed human-wave attacks. In the early days of the Korean War, Task Force Smith's hasty blocking action was almost suicidal but required by dire circumstances.[4]

Even so, U.S. soldiers do not strap explosive vests to their bodies or purposefully ram cars or trucks laden with explosives into buildings.[5] The suicide bombings taking place in Iraq are totally alien to a Western military tradition, which in no way views such action as heroic.

Oriental tradition. Suicide operations within the Oriental tradition have occurred sporadically across various cultures. In the 13th century, Mongol light cavalry "suicide troops" (mangudai) were used as bait. They charged the enemy then retreated, hoping the enemy would break ranks and pursue them into a well-coordinated trap.[6] However, Mongol suicide or near-suicide operational concepts did not extend into the modern world. Those of the Japanese did, however.

The Japanese military drew on principles of Bushido—"the way (do) of the warrior (bushi)." These ideas were based on a fusion of Zen Buddhism and later Confucianism and were described in the *Hagakure* written in 1716 and Inazo Nitobe's *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*, translated into English in 1900.[7] The Bushido warrior code contained the provision for ritual suicide (seppuku) and made death preferable to the dishonor of being taken prisoner. This tradition resulted in the prevalence of sui-

cide operations when Japan went on the defensive during World War II. Sword-wielding officers led suicide charges, and Kamikaze (divine wind) suicide bomber aircraft units, midget submarine units, and explosive motorboat units were born.[8]

Suicide bombings also occurred during the Vietnam War. The Viet Cong used sappers (demolition commandos) who would carry or wear satchel charges and purposefully blow themselves up to destroy U.S. and Republic of Vietnam equipment and fortifications.

Special commando "Black Tiger" units of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) also conduct suicide bombings in Sri Lanka and India. The Tamils are unique because they possess a hybrid Western and Oriental tradition that "advocate[s] a Tamil nationalism that is expressed by its leaders in religious terms referring to the cult of martyrs."[9] The group is innovative, having copied the Hezbollah suicide-bombing concept of operations in 1987 years before non-Shi'ia Palestinian terrorist groups used such methods. About 200 Tamil suicide bombings occurred from 1987 to late 2001, resulting in the group's status as preeminent user of the technique. Currently, the Tamil Tigers are in a state of "strategic pause" with regard to suicide bombings but are capable of starting them again at any time.

Islamic tradition. Islamic suicide bombings are of interest because they provide the philosophical context in which such operations in Iraq are being conducted. Raphael Israeli's article, "A Manual of Islamic Fundamentalist Terrorism," is the best overview of suicide bombing's Islamic philosophical origins.[10] He notes that the conceptual basis for the Shi'ite cult of martyrdom is a tradition that originated with Hussein ibn Ali, grandson of the prophet Muhammad. Hussein ibn Ali, sacrificed himself for Allah when he and his followers were annihilated by Caliph Yazid's army at Karbalah in 680.

The idea of individual "selfless sacrifice" was used during the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s when units of Iranian children, wearing the "keys to paradise" around their necks, cleared Iraqi minefields with their bodies. These Shi'ia sacrifices were immortalized with blood-red colored water in a fountain dedicated to martyrs in Tehran.

In 1982, the Iranian revolution under the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was exported to Lebanon, where the Islamic Resistance, a precursor of Hezbollah (Party of God), launched suicide attacks against American, French, and Israeli targets. Thus, Hezbollah, created in 1982 as a counter to the Israeli invasion, was the impetus for modern suicide operations. Hezbollah exploited the images of the cult of Hussein ibn Ali to inculcate self-sacrifice and martyrdom as an ideal for its fighters. This Shi'ite group, which uses both terrorist and guerrilla techniques, conducted its first large suicide bombing in April 1983 against the U.S. Embassy in Beirut. That bombing was directly influenced by the first documented vehicular suicide bombing (in December 1981) against the Iraqi Embassy in Lebanon. The Shi'ia Amal group, which had links with Hezbollah on the latter's formation, conducted the 1981 bombing.

Suicide bombings remained solely a Shi'ia activity for a decade until Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement), a Sunni terrorist group, conducted a suicide bombing within Israel in April 1993 against Israeli Defense Forces soldiers. This ideological transference from Shi'ia to Sunni came about through two circumstances. The first was Israel's exiling of more than 400 Islamic activists, many of them Hamas members, to southern Lebanon in December 1992. Hezbollah befriended these activists based on the simple rationale that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." While in exile, Hamas members were influenced by Hezbollah's suicide bombing techniques and took them back to the West Bank when they were repatriated.

The second event was the fatwas (religious edicts) created by fundamentalist Sunni scholars to rationalize how Shi'ia concepts of selfless sacrifice could fit into Sunni thinking about martyrdom and punishing one's enemies. Suicide bombings spread to other fundamentalist Sunni terrorist groups then to secular, nationalistic terrorist organizations such as the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, which emerged in 2000 as an offshoot of Yassar Arafat's Fatah faction of the Palestinian Liberation Organization.

The migration of suicide bombings from the religious to the secular set the stage for Saddam Hussein's use of this technique against allied invasion forces in Operation Iraqi Freedom, and explains why any combination of former Iraqi Ba'ath party loyalists (to a limited extent) and fundamentalist Shi'ia and Sunni terrorists now operating in Iraq could conduct suicide bombings.[11] Suicide bombers look forward to death because, as martyrs, they expect Allah to reward them in paradise, and they and their families will gain social status.

Economic benefits such as monetary payments might also come to family members as an additional bonus for completing a successful operation. During the Second Intifada, Saddam Hussein provided cash payments of $25,000 to the families of

A jagged piece of the World Trade Center hangs precariously over the street after shearing through a neighboring building.

FEMA

Palestinian insurgents killed in suicide attacks against Israeli targets.[12] Suicide operations range in organizational sophistication as well. A single suicide bomber might act individually against a target; two or three might coordinate the bombings; or a larger number of suicide bombers might participate as for example, the 19 al-Qaeda members who hijacked 4 U.S. airliners on 11 September 2001 and who coordinated their activities as part of a strike force against multiple targets.

Operational and Strategic Context

Suicide operations, which are more inclusive than suicide bombings, have historically occurred in all three dominant military traditions. However, only in the Islamic tradition are suicide bombings currently employed. The Tamil Tigers have not engaged in suicide bombings for the past few years.

Modern suicide bombings were first operationally employed during the early 1980s in southern Lebanon by the Amal and Hezbollah groups. The technique spread to the Tamil Tigers in 1987 and to Hamas in 1993. Over the ensuing decade, an increasing number of terrorist groups have engaged in suicide bombings: Palestine Islamic Jihad in 1994, Kurdistan Workers Party in 1996, al-Qaeda in 1998, Chechens in 2000, and al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in 2002.[13] With the exception of the Kurdistan Workers Party, this pattern has been part of a radical Islamic global insurgency against the United States and its allies since 1993.

We can analyze major groups engaging in suicide bombings by delivery modes (figure 1) and target sets (figure 2). The Tamil Tigers and al-Qaeda top the list in suicide-bombing sophistication, followed by the Chechens and Hezbollah. Less sophisticated groups are Hamas, Palestine Islamic Jihad, and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, although they have engaged in a greater number of suicide bombings than some of the other major groups. The Kurdistan Workers Party is at the bottom of the sophistication scale.

More sophisticated groups use larger, higher order explosive devices and engage in simultaneous (multiple suicide bombers or targets) or sequential

attacks (secondary and tertiary suicide bombers at the same target), often using other weapons. They can engage "hard," rather than solely "soft," targets, partially because they have larger bombs and better explosives, and they have access to more delivery methods. Triggering methods (fuzes, pull cords, cell phones) also increase with sophistication, and explosive devices are more difficult to detect by sensors (x-rays, metal detectors, dogs, soldiers).[14]

Operational advantages of suicide bombings over normal terrorist bombings include the following:

- The device is precisely delivered to the target. The suicide bomber functions as a precision weapon taking the explosive device right to the target, which is a standoff attack in the sense that the terrorist is "invisible" (stealth-masked) until the device is detonated, which helps overcome the Western advantage of standoff targeting based on physical distance.
- Harder targets can be attacked. Targets that cannot normally be attacked can now be reached. Normal terrorist bombings will not damage heavily fortified compounds that have proper standoff distances, but suicide bombers can crash through the front gate of a fortified compound and reach the desired target.
- The device has no window of vulnerability. The explosive device cannot be found and moved or rendered safe before detonation.
- No planned egress is required. A person simply has to deliver the explosive charge to the target. Escape routes and avoidance of capture afterward are not a consideration.
- No one is left alive to interrogate. Because suicide bombers are not typically captured, terrorist groups can better maintain operational security. The Tamil Tigers use poison capsules as a fail-safe method in this regard. Some Palestinian groups use a redundant, cell-phone-activated detonator that can be set off by calling the cell-phone number if the bomber attempts to back out of the mission.
- No burden of wounded comrades exists. Injured comrades create a logistical strain on a group.
- The horror factor increases the attack's psychological effect. Suicide bombers wearing bomb vests are blown to pieces, and typically, their heads are separated from their bodies. Individuals look at one another with suspicion in areas where suicide bombings occur frequently, which creates higher levels of anxiety for U.S. troops: they must scan

Group	Personnel	Vehicular	Aircraft	Vessel
Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades	Yes	Yes	No	No
Al-Qaeda	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chechens	Yes	Yes	No	No
Hamas	Yes	Yes	No	No
Hezbollah	Yes	Yes	No	No
PKK	Yes	No	No	No
PIJ	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
LTTE	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

PIJ – Palestine Islamic Jihad PKK – Kurdistan Workers Party LTTE – Tamil Tigers

Source: Counter-OPFOR Program, National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NLECTC)–West ©2003

Figure 1. Major groups by suicide-bomber delivery mode.

Group	Civilian (Personnel)	Military/LE (Personnel)	VIP	Transit	Aircraft	Vessel	Buildings/ Infrastructure
Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Al-Qaeda	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chechens	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Hamas	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Hezbollah	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes
PKK	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
PIJ	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
LTTE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

PIJ – Palestine Islamic Jihad PKK – Kurdistan Workers Party LTTE – Tamil Tigers

Source: Counter-OPFOR Program, NLECTC–West ©2003

Figure 2. Major groups by suicide-bomber target set.

everyone in a crowd for bulky clothing and unusual behavior.

- Blood-borne pathogens can be delivered. Suicide bombers infected with hepatitis and HIV can create a "hazmat" incident by spreading disease to targeted personnel. Bone fragments and blood-covered bolts and nails might directly transmit pathogens from the bomber to nearby victims.

Another strategic consideration is that suicide bombings create martyrs for the society from which the group recruits. As more suicide bombers kill themselves and gain prestige in the eyes of their society, the cycle of violence can escalate into a "religious movement." Already, Palestinian society is taking on characteristics of a death cult with young children preferring to grow up to be suicide bombers rather than engineers and doctors. Recruitment of new suicide bombers is not difficult.

Radical Islamic networks, including al-Qaeda, are engaging in a global insurgency against the West. Martyrdom is one of the common bonds that hold the insurgency together, and it is increasing in strength as more terrorist groups engage in suicide bombings. The Roman Empire faced a similar strategic dilemma with Christian martyrs. The radical Islamic link to martyrdom, now more than 20 years old, must be broken before it becomes too fully entrenched.

OIF Statistical Findings

Suicide operations have become emblematic of terrorism and war. Human-, vehicle-, and vessel-borne suicide bombers are a continuing concern to military, police, and security forces. This concern extends to Iraq and has been seen in all phases of operations in the Iraqi theater. The account of "major combat" operations in David Zucchino's *Los Angeles Times Magazine* article "The Thunder Run" mentions suicide bombers during that phase of operations and covers the prelude to the fall of Baghdad from 4 to 8 April 2003.[15]

Zucchino, who was embedded with Task Force 4-64 of the 2d Brigade, 3d Infantry Division (Mechanized), describes attempted suicide attacks against U.S. forces. While traversing Highway 8 toward Baghdad on 5 April 2003, a mechanized column encountered small arms and rocket-propelled grenade fire. Intermingled with Iraqi military vehicles were civilian cars, taxis, buses, and motorcycles. Some Iraqi combatants wore military uniforms, some wore civilian clothes, and others wore the black attire of the Fedayeen Saddam. During this encounter, Task Force 1-64, a battalion known as "Rogue," was taking heavy fire. Zucchino describes how two suicide vehicles packed with explosives sped down the offramp toward U.S. forces.[16] The vehicles were destroyed before they could complete their attack. However, according to Zucchino, suicide vehicles loaded with explosives intermingled with Fedayeen, Arab volunteers, and Republican Guards. One particular vehicle, an orange-and-white taxi, attempted to ram a mechanized U.S. column.[17] Such events have become increasingly familiar to U.S. and coalition forces in Iraq.

We attempt here to place suicide operations in context by describing them in the premajor combat buildup, during major combat operations (transmajor combat), and during the postmajor combat phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom. In addition, we divide the postmajor combat phase into two segments: pre- and postcapture of Saddam Hussein. We also identify attacks occurring during Ramadan 2003, basing our analysis exclusively on open-source intelligence. We relied on media reporting from multiple sources, including wire services, news websites, and newspapers. We consulted several chronologies and databases and attempted to deconflict reports and casualty figures. Not all sources agreed on details, but the major trend is consistent.[18] For example, on 19 March 2004, 1 day before the 1-year anniversary of the end of major combat, the Associated Press (AP) reported that at least 660 persons were killed in 24 suicide bombings that year. The AP report began its tally on 29 March 2003 and ended it on 18 March 2004 and counted 18 vehicle- and 6 human-borne bombings. The article also noted that this frequency was greater than the Israel-Palestinian toll over the previous 3-1/2 years.[19]

We recorded 49 entries for the same period (some were potential incidents, some were attempts, and others were multiple strikes). We identified a total of 54 entries, some of which were multiple attacks during a single coordinated assault. The 54 entries yielded total casualties of approximately 813 killed and 2,154 injured. The figures include suicide bombers in the totals. When we divided by phase we found two events during the premajor combat phase (5 killed in 1 vehicle- and 1 human-borne assault), 9 events during the transmajor combat phase, (17 killed, 33 injured in 5 vehicle- and 4 human-borne assaults); and 43 events during the postmajor combat phase (791 killed, 2,121 injured in 35 vehicle-, 8 human-borne, and 1 unknown-mode assaults).

When we subdivided the postmajor combat phase into the periods before and after Saddam Hussein's capture, we documented 18 events before capture (totaling 274 killed and 749 injured in 16 vehicle- and

US Air Force

Air Force Explosive Ordnance and Devices specialists demonstrate a captured bomb vest during a briefing on suicide bombers.

2 human-borne attacks) and 25 events postcapture (517 killed, 1,372 injured in 18 vehicle- and 6 human-borne attacks, and 1 unknown mode). We noted 5 events during the so-called "Ramadan Offensive" in 2003 (102 deaths and 354 injuries).

Our first entry occurred on 26 February 2003 during the buildup to the war. The combat phase began on 20 March 2003, and the first entry in this phase was recorded on 22 March 2003. We began the postmajor combat period on 2 May 2003, when major combat operations ended. Our last entry was on 18 March 2004 because analysis ended on 20 March 2004, 1 year from when major combat began.

Premajor combat. The premajor combat phase includes entries on 26 February 2003 and 13 March 2003 when Ansar al-Islam attacked Kurdish interests. Iranian hard-liners called for Palestinian suicide bombers to target U.S. forces in the region.[20] And, by 11 February 2003, Iraqi officials were threatening suicide operations should the war begin, with Iraqi Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan asserting that Iraq would deploy thousands of suicide attackers.[21]

On 11 February 2003, Osama bin-Laden joined the information campaign with an audiotape aired on Qatar's Al-Jazeera television network in which he called on Iraqis to carry out suicide attacks against U.S. forces. His call was echoed on 23 February 2003 by Afghani warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who urged Iraqis and Muslims worldwide to carry out suicide attacks against the United States. By 12 March 2003, Saddam Hussein was calling for Arabs seeking martyrdom to join the struggle and conduct suicide bombings against the U.S. military. The British Navy expressed concerns about potential Iraqi suicide vessels, and reports of Iraqi suicide training camps began to surface.

Transmajor combat. The first attack in the transmajor combat phase occurred against a Kurdish military checkpoint at Khurmal, Kurdistan. In addition to the suicide bomber, at least three Kurds and an Australian news cameraman were killed. By 21 March, Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad had joined the call to employ suicide bombings, urging Iraqis to prepare suicide belts and confront America with martyrdom operations. In response, U.S. forces were advised to strip enemy prisoners of war to counter potential suicide bombings.[22] Iranian naval forces reportedly intercepted an explosive-laden Iraqi fast boat, and claimed to have spotted at least four additional suicide vessels.[23]

On 26 March 2003, an expatriate Ansar leader told Dutch television that Ansar suicide commandos would attack U.S. troops, a claim that had to be

taken seriously given the Ansar attacks in Kurdistan. Information began to surface that foreign fighters, including Hezbollah, were en route to join the war.[24]

The first successful attack against U.S. forces occurred on 29 March 2003 in Najaf. Four U.S. soldiers were killed in an Iraqi vehicular suicide attack. Iraqi leaders claimed this was the beginning of a "routine military policy," and the attacker was posthumously awarded two medals by Saddam Hussein.[25] In the aftermath of this attack, information operations supporting use of suicide operations increased. These propaganda actions were supported by an "affinity" attack in Netanya, Israel, on 30 March 2003, which injured 49 Israelis in what the Islamic Jihad called "Palestine's gift to the heroic people of Iraq."[26] The Al-Quds Brigades deployed suicide operatives to Baghdad, and Islamic leaders, websites, and newspapers across the Middle East and elsewhere took up the call to join the jihad and encouraged suicide martyrs to defend Iraq.[27]

U.S. Marines found a cache of suicide vests in a Baghdad school on 13 April 2003. The vests, lined with C4 plastic explosive and containing ball bearings, were believed to have been secreted by paramilitary fighters associated with the Fedayeen Saddam. U.S. forces also found evidence of suicide training and recruitment efforts.

Actor/Group	Personnel	Vehicle	Aircraft	Vessel
Ansar al-Islam	Yes	Yes	No	No
Jihad/al-Qaeda	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Fedayeen/Iraqi	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

Source: Counter-OPFOR Program, NLECTC–West©2003

Figure 3. Suicide-bomber delivery modes in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Suicide attacks during the transmajor combat phase were limited in scope and sophistication. Most assaults were directed against U.S. military convoys, columns, or checkpoints. While suicide attacks during major combat had little military significance, they were an emerging force-protection concern and a precursor for suicide operations in the insurgency that followed.

Postmajor combat. Suicide operations gained momentum during the postmajor combat phase with more than 43 suicide events after major combat ended. The events have yielded many casualties and demonstrate an increased sophistication in targeting and coordination. The attacks continue to focus on U.S. military targets but include other targets of increasing strategic importance. New targets included the Italian Carabinieri, the International Committee of the Red Cross, Iraqi police, Shi'ia religious venues, political figures, and diplomatic sites such as the Jordanian and Turkish Embassies and UN facilities.

The first attack in this phase was the 7 August 2003 truck bombing of the Jordanian Embassy. Coming after a lull in operations, the attack signaled the start of a concerted suicide bombing campaign in support of an Iraqi insurgency. An attack on the UN headquarters in Baghdad followed on 19 August. Employing a suicide-initiated, vehicle-borne improvised explosive device, the truck-borne assault targeted the front of the UN headquarters located in the former Canal Hotel and killed 25 and injured 100. Intended to erode public and international support for U.S. reconstruction of Iraq, the attack severely curtailed UN operations. In what appeared to be a reinforcing action aimed at eroding coalition stability efforts, a second attack against the UN occurred on 22 September.

An apparent resurgence of anti-coalition suicide attacks began when Ramadan began. The "Ramadan Offensive," from 26 October to 24 November 2003, accounted for six suicide events, two of which were of major symbolic and strategic importance. On 27 October, suicide bombers attacked the Red Cross offices. The attack was coordinated with attacks on five Iraqi police stations where 40 people were killed and more than 200 injured. The 12 November attack against the Italian Carabinieri base in Nasiriya killed 31 and injured 80. The attacks caused the suspension of humanitarian operations by many nongovernmental relief organizations and provoked political discussion worldwide on the presence of coalition forces. Attacks on Shi'ite religious leaders, mosques, and shrines also occurred during this time, fueling lack of confidence in the coalition's reconstruction plans.

Suicide bombings were increasingly used as a tool to stimulate insurgency during this phase. Their sophistication increased, and they began using larger bombs, fuel tankers, and—particularly perfidious—ambulances and police cars, in combination assaults. Suicide operations also augmented armed assaults. Foreign jihadi fighters apparently also played crucial roles.

Premajor combat information operations seem to have resonated. Some accounts suggest al-Qaeda links, including the infusion of Lashkar-e-Toiba, Chechen members of Bin Laden's International Islamic Front, and Pakistanis, Saudis, and Jordanians.[28]

Aftermath of a car bomb that killed Ezzidin Salim, the head of the Iraqi Governing Council, 17 May 2004.

US Army

As noted in a 14 December 2003 *Los Angeles Times* account, insurgents demonstrated increasing sophistication in terms of tactics, strategy, and intelligence operations with suicide operations being central to this mix. The article says: "A menacing wild card in the war is the corps of suicide bombers, mostly believed to be foreign born jihadis, whom the insurgent forces appear to be able to call on for precision attacks, such as the bombings at the United Nations' headquarters in Baghdad and a strike at Italian military police headquarters in the southern city of Nasiriyah."[29]

By 29 November 2003, media reports detailed al-Qaeda links to the Iraqi insurgency, noting that Iraq was central to its global insurgency efforts. European jihadis were being recruited for Iraq, and the importance of Abu Musab Zarqawi's network, as well as a Zarqawi-Ansar alliance in staging suicide operations against military, diplomatic, and humanitarian targets in Iraq, emerged.[30] In early February 2004 in Palestine and Iraq, Islamist leaders proclaimed martyrdom operations were a religious obligation.[31]

By 29 February 2004, the jihadi suicide-bombing imperative had "taken root in the ravaged landscape of postwar Iraq."[32] This phase of operations is significant for the rising number of suicide attacks within an increasing insurgent operational tempo. The gains in sophistication demonstrated in the UN, Red Cross, and Carabinieri attacks before Saddam Hussein's capture carried over into the postcapture period, with an increase in events, casualties, and sophistication. Suicide bombings had become firmly embedded in the Iraqi insurgent armamentarium.

The Future

Suicide bombings during Operation Iraqi Freedom began with a series of low-key, preconflict indicators. A couple of successful bombings occurred in Kurdistan followed by calls from Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime to use martyrdom operations to thwart U.S. intentions. Then Islamist leaders made Saddam Hussein's call their own to stimulate their vision of an anti-U.S., anti-Western global jihad. During major combat operations, a relatively small number of tactically insignificant suicide attacks were directed against U.S. military forces. These attacks did not delay the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime or affect the outcome of combat operations.

These attacks—as with any attack employing suicide operations by irregular forces cloaked in civilian attire—were clear violations of international law. As such, they constituted perfidy or "acts inviting the confidence of an adversary to lead him to believe that he is entitled to, or is accorded,

protection under the rules of international law."[33] The United States did not ratify the 1977 protocols, but customary prohibitions of such conduct still apply. In addition, targeting civilians is clearly terrorism and constitutes a war crime. International humanitarian law absolutely prohibits intentional targeting of civilians (including police forces).

While traditional Islamic law explicitly proscribes suicide and the targeting of innocent civilians, Bin Laden's al-Qaeda, the International Islamic Front, Palestinian insurgents, and "secular" groups, such as Fatah and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, sidestep these prohibitions by referring to suicide bombers as martyrs and interpreting their actions as a religious duty. The tactic of "extreme revenge" has been transported to Iraq and perhaps in the future will appear elsewhere.[34]

The suicide bombings in Iraq, particularly against U.S. troops, then against the UN, Red Cross, police, and civilian targets, demonstrated a new chapter in global terrorism and insurgency. Martyrdom operations signal an escalation in the conflict because they seek maximum casualties and destruction. Suicide attacks are low-cost, precision means that yield a high symbolic return. At the tactical level, suicide operations allow precise targeting through manipulation of organic stealth: the bomber is masked until the operation occurs, barring accurate tactical intelligence derived from human sources within the combatant cell.

Because many suicide operations, particularly in Israel and Palestine, involve secondary or twin attacks, an awareness of secondary attack potentials must be ingrained in all military and constabulary forces involved in counterinsurgency, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and stability operations and support operations. Once the first bomb goes off, forces must always look for the potential secondary or tertiary attack. Tactical response should include separating suspicious persons from crowds and massed forces. Such police operations require increased training in constabulary operations and a higher number of constabulary forces being integrated into future military force structures.

Because checkpoints are frequently targeted, solid standoff distances at checkpoints and during intervention with suspicious persons are key. Countering suicide attacks demands enhanced intelligence; appropriate offensive military and constabulary operations; effective defensive and force-protection measures; and a force structure tailored to the counterinsurgency environment.

The tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) suicide bombers employ evolve, and the best solution for dissecting evolving TTPs is through real-time intelligence collection, assessment, and dissemination. As soon as a suicide operation occurs or is interdicted, TTP should be documented and an advisory on the equipment used and the bomber's previous behavior should be disseminated to friendly forces immediately. Quick, tactical assessments must not be delayed; the OPFOR will evolve its tactics for subsequent targets.

Suicide bombers in Iraq (or anywhere else, for that matter) will conduct operations based on local conditions and capabilities. For example, vehicle-borne attacks frequently rely on a high-speed approach to circumvent tactical security measures. Multiple attacks are designed to overwhelm operational-level coordination and force allocation. TTPs used in Palestine and by the LTTE in the Indian subcontinent provide good background information, as do the events we recount here. However, the current and future OPFOR will adapt TTPs to local context, capabilities, and countermeasures.

Strategically, suicide bombings erode the public's confidence and that of the expeditionary force's home audience. In Iraq, attacks stimulate the insurgency and undermine attempts to build a secure civil society. International organizations, such as the UN and Red Cross, and humanitarian entities are now reluctant to operate in the contested theater, which hinders attempts to restore stability. Perhaps most important, the experience of suicide bombings and their role in nurturing and sustaining an insurgency provides key strategic lessons. Like much of the Arab world, Iraq has little historical tolerance for occupation (especially by non-Muslims). This, combined with the contemporary appeal of radical jihad, creates an incendiary political mixture that provides Iraqi insurgents motivation, legitimacy, and a global support network.

The infusion of foreign jihadi fighters and the influence of transnational organized crime also make paramount the need for intelligence and law-enforcement components in the military counterinsurgency.[35] The jihadi-criminal-insurgent mix challenges civil governance and the rule of law. Military forces alone cannot reconstruct a civil society. The Iraqi experience demonstrates the need for expanded constabulary forces and the integration of military units, intelligence, police forces, and operations in concert with (or supporting the formation of) civil authorities.

As the United States seeks stability in Iraq and, potentially, in other states targeted by radical Islam-

ists, such interaction is essential. Suicide bombings continue in Iraq and elsewhere with regularity, fueling insurgency and stimulating jihadi support. U.S. soldiers and Marines continue to find indicators of future suicide potentials, including new caches of bomb belts and jihadi propaganda promoting suicide tactics. We hope to capture those lessons learned as the United States continues its struggle against extremists who use the suicide of their warriors as the ultimate sign of their resolve and as a rejection of a global civil society built on the rule of law. ***MR***

NOTES

1. See the bond-relationship targeting section of Robert J. Bunker's article, "Higher Dimensional Warfighting," *Military Review* (September-October 1999): 57–59.

2. Suicide bombings are known by different terms depending on the group in question. Jihadi and other radical Islamic groups call these bombings "martyrdom operations," and those who blow themselves up are "martyrs." Many officers in U.S. law enforcement commonly use the imprecise term "homicide bombers." Some academics, such as Raphael Israeli, refer to suicide bombers as "Islamikazes." For simplicity, we use "suicide bombings" and "suicide bombers."

3. SFC Randy Shughart and MSG Gary Gordon were posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. For more on their heroic actions, see Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999).

4. GEN Douglas MacArthur viewed Task Force Smith as an "arrogant display of strength." Initially, it was thought this ad hoc, 540-man force might fool the North Koreans into thinking a larger force was present or even make them retreat when they found out they were engaging U.S. soldiers. Neither event occurred. After two valiant tactical engagements at the Battle of Osan on 5 July 1950 what was left of the small task force withdrew in the face of advancing Korean People's Army units. See Maurice Matloff, ed., *American Military History*, 2: *1902–1996* (Conshohocken, PA: Combined Books, 1996), 207.

5. Despite the tradition that soldiers do not conduct suicide attacks, isolated events have occurred. Some late 19th- and early 20th-century anarchists (the terrorists of their day) conducted suicide attacks. For example, in 1892 Russian anarchist Alexander Berkman tried to ignite an explosive capsule in his teeth while being subdued by police during the botched assassination attempt of industrialist Henry Clay Frick. See Caleb Carr, *The Lessons of Terror* (New York: Random House, 2002), 148. So, even in Western tradition terrorists have the potential to engage in suicide attacks. Early Christianity considered suicide for God as lawful: "He who knows it is unlawful to kill himself may never the less do so if he is ordered by God," wrote Bishop Augustine in the 4th Century. See St. Augustine, *City of God*, Book I, secs. 18-26, *Summa Theologica,* 2-2, q. 64, 5.

6. James Chambers, *The Devil's Horsemen: The Mongol Invasion of Europe* (Edison, NJ: Castle Books, 2003), 63.

7. Bunker, *"Bushido," World War II in the Pacific: An Encyclopedia,* ed. Stanley Sandler (New York: Garland Publishing, 2001), 134–35.

8. For an extensive list of Japanese suicide units, see Richard O'Neill, *Suicide Squads* (Sydney: Lansdowne Press, 1981).

9. Peter Schalk, "The Revival of the Martyr Cults," *Temenos,* 33 (1997): 151.

10. Raphael Israeli, "A Manual of Islamic Fundamentalist Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* (Winter 2002): 23-40.

11. While suicide bombings spread to the secular socialist Kurdistan Workers Party years before Fatah's al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, they were probably too early to directly influence Iraqi thinking.

12. See "Iraq continues paying Palestinian suicide bombers' families," *Iraqi Kurdistan Dispatch,* 20 June 2002, on-line at <www.ikurd.info/news-20jun-p2.htm>, accessed 3 December 2004; and "Saddam stokes war with suicide bomber cash," *Sydney Morning Herald,* 26 March 2002.

13. The dates for the initial suicide bombing incidents are derived from open-source information (OSINT).

14. More specific information on tactics and techniques are outside this article's scope and venue. The International Institute for Counter-Terrorism at the Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya, contains some helpful OSINT documents. See also the following documents: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai, "Countering Suicide Terrorism," 2002; Human Rights Watch, "Erased in a Moment: Suicide Bombing Attacks Against Israeli Civilians," New York, 2002, on-line at <www.hrw.org/reports/2002/isrl-pa/>, accessed 3 December 2004. U.S. military and law-enforcement elements should see the unclassified but restricted Technical Support Working Group article, "Suicide Bombing in World Terrorism," 26 June 2003.

15. David Zucchino, "The Thunder Run," *Los Angeles Times Magazine,* 7 December 2003, 19–38.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid. While Zucchino's account chronicles several attempted suicide attacks against U.S. forces on 5 and 7 April 2003 during the battle for Baghdad, the chronology contains several others. Needless to say, media reporting of the situation in Iraq is clouded by the fog of war. Undoubtedly, accounts of these attacks vary, some not reported, and details are often sketchy. Therefore, all these events should be viewed as representative rather than definitive.

18. Media reports surveyed include the wire services Reuters, Agence France Press, Associated Press, and United Press International. Websites include BBC, CNN, Fox News, Reuters Alertnet, "The Agonist," and the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) Iraq Information Portal. Print media sources (including on-line versions) include the *New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, Christian Science Monitor, Times of London, Asia Times, Times of India, Sydney Morning Herald*, and *Manchester Guardian*. The Terrorism Research Center's premium Content Terrorist Attack database and Counter-OPFOR Program, National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NLECTC)-West, Suicide Bomber Web-base were also reviewed. We sought to use the most recent, corrected reports when available, yet ambiguity remains.

19. Tarek al-Issam, "Suicide attacks ravage Iraq," *Toronto Star*, 19 March 2004.

20. "Iran and Threats to U.S. Forces in Middle East," Strategic Forecasting, Inc. (STRATFOR), 21 January 2003.

21. "Iraq Threatens Suicide Attacks Against U.S. Troops," Reuters, 1 February 2003.

22. Oliver Poole, "POWs to be stripped in suicide bomb fears," *The Telegraph*, 22 March 2003.

23. "Four Iraqi suicide speedboats spotted, one intercepted," World Tribune.com, 27 March 2003, on-line at <http://216.26.163.62/2003/me_terror_03_27.html>, accessed 3 December 2004; and "Suicide boats 'major threat' to Australian ships," *Sydney Morning Herald,* 31 March 2003.

24. "Hundreds of Hizbullah en route to northern Iraq," *The World Tribune,* on-line at <http://216.26.163.62/2003/me_terror_03_28.html>, accessed 28 March 2003.

25. "Suicide Bombing Kills Four U.S. Troops, 3/30/03," PBS, on-line at <www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/jan-june03/suicide_3-27.html>, accessed 14 January 2005.

26. Jason Keyser, "Suicide Bombing Injures 30 in Israel," *The Washington Post,* 30 March 2003.

27. Numerous reports detail the extent of Islamist extremist support and recruitment to engage in jihadist activity in Iraq. A representative account is found in Philip Smucker and Dan Murphy, "A broad call for 'martyrs' for Iraq," *Christian Science Monitor,* 1 April 2003.

28. B. Raman, "Jihadi anger: After Italy, Australia?" *Asia Times,* 14 November 2003.

29. Patrick J. McDonnell and John Hendren, "U.S. Officials and Iraqis Agree That Conflict Will Get Worse," *Los Angeles Times,* 14 December 2003.

30. Sebastian Rotella, "3 Terror Network Suspects Arrested," *Los Angeles Times,* 29 November 2003.

31. "New Muslim Brotherhood Leader: Resistance in Iraq and Palestine is Legitimate; America is Satan: Islam will Invade America and Europe," Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), Special Dispatch Series, No. 655, 4 February 2004.

32. Patrick J. McDonnell and Sebastian Rotella, "Making Bombers in Iraq," *Los Angeles Times,* 29 February 2004.

33. Text available on-line at <www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/7c4d08d9b287a42141256739003e636b/f6c8b9fee14a77fdc125641e0052b079>, accessed 14 January 2005.

34. For a discussion of suicide operations in Palestine and their motivation, see Avishai Margalit, "The Suicide Bombers," *The New York Review of Books,* 16 January 2003.

35. For an excellent analysis of the current insurgency in Iraq and the need to develop integrated security structures to address the insurgent-criminal-jihadi nexus, see Steven Metz, "Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq," *The Washington Quarterly* (Winter 2003–2004): 25–35.

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